AV Cables CC Focus

Edition 29 - March 2009

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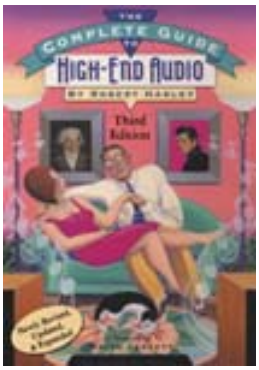

'AVCables CC focus' - your source for keeping you up to date on all the latest news, reviews, events and technical commentary related to our world-renowned product ranges. Please forward any inputs, comments or suggestions you may have to letters@avcables.co.za

Editorial Comment

Welcome to our **29th** edition of AVCables Focus.

In this edition, we continue our feature article (part 3), covering excerpts from world-renowned hi-fi reviewer Robert Harley, Editor-in-Chief of *The Absolute Sound* Magazine, on **system setup secrets**. Excellent stuff! Do not miss out!!

Our 'News' section covers the release of **EmmLabs' new flagship DAC and Transport units**, the DAC2 and TSD1; and in our 'Technical Snippets' section we continue our posting of **FAQs on HDMI cables and technology.**

And in our regular 'Reviews' section, we cover a recent review from ToneAudio on the **Furutech's tonearm cable**, as well as a recent local review of the **Furutech Ref III speaker and analogue cables**.

As already mentioned, we are planning another **MUSIC DAY** where you can hang out, chat, eat, drink, listen to good music and buy great hi-fi products! Be sure to read more about this event and **let us know if you're planning on attending**!

Finally, we wish to once again appeal to all our **subscribers to get actively involved** in our Newsletter this year. Your feedback, ideas and input will make this Newsletter much more fun to read for all and more technically relevant via combined inputs and experiences from a large music lover audience...get at it right away and send us an e-mail to letters@avcables.co.za

A reminder to please browse through our classifieds and **product SPECIALS** for great deals on offer.

Enjoy!

Jeandré Botha

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Feature Article: Robert Harley's system setup secrets (part 3)

How an audio system is installed, set up, and fine-tuned has an enormous impact on that system's sound quality. You might have chosen some great individual audio components, but that doesn't guarantee you'll get great sound.

If you have missed out on part 2 of this excerpt, please download our previous newsletter now by clicking here.

Introduction

We continue our feature article (part 3) with excerpts from world-renowned hi-fi reviewer Robert Harley, Editor-in-Chief of *The Absolute Sound* Magazine, on system setup secrets. The excerpts have been compiled from his book, *"The Complete Guide to High -End Audio"*. All credit for this compilation goes to the author.

Loudspeaker Placement

Finding the right spot for your loudspeakers is the single most important factor in getting good sound from your system. Loudspeaker placement affects tonal balance, the quantity and quality of bass, soundstage width and depth, midrange clarity, articulation, and imaging.

As you make large changes in loudspeaker placement, then fine-tune placement with smaller and smaller adjustments, you'll hear a newfound musical rightness and seamless harmonic integration to the sound. When you get it right, your system will come alive. Best of all, it costs no more than a few hours of your time.

Before getting to specific recommendations, let's cover the six fundamental factors that affect how a loudspeaker's sound will change with placement. (Later we'll look at each of these factors in detail.)

1) The relationship between the loudspeakers and the listener is of paramount importance. The listener and loudspeakers should form a triangle; without this basic setup, you'll never hear good soundstaging and imaging. (See Fig.1 hereunder).

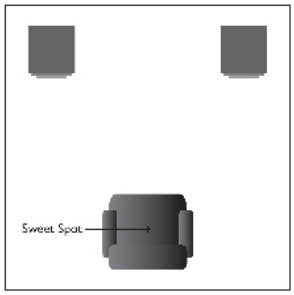

Fig.1 The "sweet spot" is the listening position where the sound snaps into focus.

2) Proximity of loudspeakers to walls affects the amount of bass. The nearer the loudspeakers are to walls and corners, the louder the bass.

3) The loudspeaker and listener positions in the room affect the audibility of room resonant modes. Room resonant modes are reinforcements at certain frequencies that create peaks in the frequency response, which can add an unnatural "boominess" to the sound. When room resonant modes are less audible, the bass is better defined, and midrange clarity increases.

4) The farther out into the room the loudspeakers are, the better the soundstaging— particularly depth.

5) Listening height affects tonal balance.

6) Toe-in (angling the loudspeakers toward the listener) affects tonal balance (particularly the amount of treble), soundstage width, and image focus.

Let's look at each of these factors in detail.

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Feature Article: Robert Harley's system setup secrets (part 3) (continued)

1) Relationship between the loudspeakers and the listener

The most important factor in getting good sound is the geometric relationship between the two loudspeakers and the listener (we aren't concerned about the room yet). The listener should sit exactly between the two loudspeakers, at a distance away from each loudspeaker slightly greater than the distance between the loudspeakers themselves. Though this last point is not a hard-and-fast rule, you should certainly sit exactly between the loudspeakers—that is, the same distance from each one. If you don't have this fundamental relationship, you'll never hear good soundstaging from your system.

TIP:
Loudspeaker placement affects tonal balance, the quantity and quality of bass, soundstage width and depth, midrange clarity, articulation, and imaging.

Fig.1, shown on previous page, illustrates how your loudspeaker and listening positions should be arranged. This is such a fundamental prerequisite to good sound that I'll repeat this section. The listening position—equidistant from the speakers, and slightly farther from each speaker than the speakers are from each other—is called the "sweet spot." This is roughly the listening position where the music will snap into focus and sound the best. If you sit to the side of the sweet spot, the soundstage will tend to bunch up around one speaker. This bunching-up effect will vary with the loudspeaker; some loudspeakers produce a wider sweet spot than others. Setting the distance between the loudspeakers is a trade-off between a wide soundstage and a strong center image. **The farther apart the loudspeakers are (assuming the same listening position), the wider the soundstage will be**. As the loudspeakers are moved farther apart, however, the center image weakens, and can even disappear. If the loudspeakers are too close together, soundstage width is constricted. The best listening angle will produce a strong center image and a wide soundstage. You can experiment with angle simply by moving your listening chair forward and backward. There will likely be a position where the center image snaps into focus, appearing as a stable, pinpoint spot exactly between the loudspeakers. A musical selection with a singer and sparse accompaniment is ideal for setting loudspeaker spacing and ensuring a strong center image.

With the loudspeakers fairly close together, listen for a tightly focused image exactly between the two loudspeakers. Move the loudspeakers a little farther apart and listen again. Repeat this move/listen procedure until you start to hear the central image become larger, more diffuse, and less focused, indicating that you've gone slightly beyond the maximum distance your loudspeakers should be from each other for a given listening position. Move the speakers slightly closer together until the image snaps into focus again—you've just found the optimum separation of your speaker for a given listening distance.

A factor to consider in setting this angle is the relationship to the room. You can have the same geometric relationship between loudspeakers and listener with the loudspeakers close together and a close listening position, or with the loudspeakers far apart and a more distant listening position. At the distant listening position, the listening room's acoustic character will affect the sound more than at the close listening position. That's because at the close position you hear more direct sound from the loudspeaker and less reflected sound from the room's walls. Consequently, the farther away you sit, the more spacious the sound. The closer you sit, the more direct and immediate the presentation.

Some loudspeakers need a significant distance between the loudspeaker and the listener to allow the loudspeakers' individual drive units to integrate. If you hear a large tonal difference just by sitting closer, you should listen from a point farther away from the speakers.

2) Proximity to walls affects the amount of bass

The room boundaries have a great effect on a loudspeaker's overall tonal balance. Loudspeakers placed close to walls will exhibit a reinforcement in the bass (called "room gain"), making the musical presentation weightier. Some loudspeakers are designed to be near a rear wall (the wall behind the speakers); they need this reinforcement for a natural tonal balance. These loudspeakers sound thin if placed out into the room. Others sound thick and heavy if not

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Feature Article: Robert Harley's system setup secrets (part 3) (continued)

at least 3' from the rear and sidewalls. Be sure which type you're buying if your placement options are limited. When a loudspeaker is placed near a wall, its bass energy is reflected back into the room essentially in phase with the loudspeaker's output. This means the direct and reflected waves reinforce each other at low frequencies, producing louder bass. The closer to the corners the loudspeakers are placed, the more bass you'll hear. The loudspeaker's position in relation to the rear and sidewalls will also affect which frequencies are boosted. Correct placement can not only extend a loudspeaker's bass response by complementing its natural rolloff, but also avoid peaks and dips in the response. Improper placement can cause frequency-response irregularities that color the bass. That is, some frequencies are boosted relative to others, making the bass reproduction less accurate.

TIP:
Setting the distance between the loudspeakers is a trade-off between a wide soundstage and a strong center image.

The graph of Fig.2a is a loudspeaker's in-room response (the speaker's response as modified by the listening room) when placed equidistant from the rear and sidewalls. Note the 10dB notch (reduction in energy) at about 200Hz and the peak centered at 60Hz. The result will be boominess in the bass and leanness in the midbass. Moving the loudspeaker different distances from the rear and sidewalls can make the response much smoother (Fig.2b). These graphs illustrate that a loudspeaker's room position affects the bass response, and that the loudspeakers should be positioned at different distances from the rear and sidewalls. **A rule of thumb**: the two distances shouldn't be within 33% of each other. For example, if the loudspeaker is 3' from the sidewall, it should also be at least 4' from the rear wall.

Many loudspeaker manufacturers will specify the correct distance from the rear and sidewalls. When a measurement is specified, the distance is between the woofer cone and the wall. Start with the loudspeakers in the locations recommended by the manufacturer, then begin experimenting. How close the loudspeakers are to the sidewalls affects the amplitude of the sidewall reflection. The closer the loudspeakers are to the sidewalls, the higher the level of the sidewall reflections reaching the listener— not a good thing. If you've treated the sidewalls as described later in this section, putting the loudspeaker closer to the sidewall won't have as great an effect than if the sidewalls were left untreated. A highly effective technique for finding the best distances from the rear and sidewalls was developed by David Wilson of Wilson Audio Specialties. Stand at the rear wall about the same distance from the sidewall as you expect the loudspeakers to end up. Bend over and begin speaking, moving in a line perpendicular to the rear wall. Listen to the timbre of your voice as you move. You'll hear different colorations as you move, and then suddenly, at one particular location, your voice will sound open, clear, and uncolored. There will be a small range (several inches) over which your voice sounds the most natural. Mark this area on the floor with masking tape. This is the best distance from the rear wall for your loudspeakers. Now repeat this exercise, but starting on the sidewall at the same plane at which you have placed the masking tape. The point at which your voice sounds the clearest is the best distance from the sidewall to locate your loudspeaker. The two points will intersect, indicating where you should position the loudspeaker. The intersection should be just behind the loudspeaker's front baffle and centered on the woofer. This technique is very effective, and correlates very well with the placement suggested by computer modeling. The accuracy can be improved by having someone sit in the listening position as you move and speak, and confirm the point at which your voice sounds least colored.

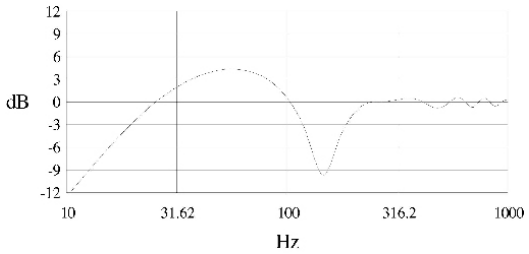

Fig.2a. Positioning a speaker equidistant from the rear wall and sidewall creates severe peaks and dips in the frequency response

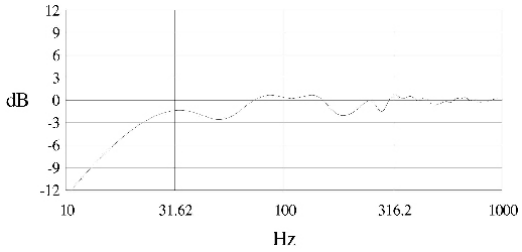

Fig.2b. This plot is the same speaker as in Fig.2a, but in a better location. Note the much smoother and flatter bass response.

(In our next edition, we continue this excerpt with setup secrets and guidelines from Robert Harley for speaker placement.)

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News, Events and Reviews

This section covers all the latest industry news and reviews on our products, as well as information on any local hi-fi news/events of interest.

AVCables News

EmmLabs announces new flagship DAC and Transport

EmmLabs has announced their latest flagship DAC and Transport units at CES 2009, thereby taking digital conversion technology to an all new level.

Their latest DAC (the **DAC2**) has been standard-fitted with Ed Meitner's proprietary "Signature Edition" **MDAT** upsampling system, discrete converter technology and EMMbed aerospace composite pcbs. The main new technology with regards to the DAC2 is **MFAST (Meitner Frequency Acquisition Technology).**

Most converters, including high end systems, use a type of PLL (phase locked loop) system to synchronize their digital systems. PLL's have many inherent flaws, most notably its lacking ability to get rid of jitter (it can only attenuate it); inherently slow to lock, a limited lock range and response time and will naturally drift thus adding jitter and phase distortion. This is where Ed Meitner distinguishes himself – the DAC2 utilises their new proprietary digital source acquisition system, called **MFAST** that captures, extracts and re-clock incoming digital audio asynchronously, thereby **completely getting rid of any source jitter!** "We sense each incoming data stream using the source frequency as reference and extract the data and re-clock using our own internal super accurate clocking system which uses an independent DSP to adjust, track and synthesize a system clock that stays in step with the source."

The DAC2 can be used with any digital source, even if the source has bad or problematic digital data. It can even be used with older transports, computers, DVD players etc. and you will be completely amazed at what this converter can do for even MP3s. Further, the DAC2's USB audio port can be hooked up to any computer based system or digital music server.

Their new Transport, the **TSD1**, also boasts with built-in MDAT technology, as well as a new proprietary EMM Link single optical fiber cable for optimum, jitter and interference free, lossless interconnection to the DAC2. It also comes fitted with a new German drive and brand new LCD display, updated transport software and a beautiful new metal remote to complement the two -box system.

Recommended Retail prices are set as follows: DAC2 – R123,000 and TSD1 – R143,000. We are currently running a promotion on these items at much reduced prices….call or e-mail us for more details!!

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Industry News and Innovations

The time is right for a 3D content delivery standard — Display Daily, 26 January 2009

If CES and recent press are any indication, **2009 is the year that 3D content moves seriously into the home**. New 3D displays and systems were among the hottest buzz at the CES 2009 show, both for video and gaming content.

What is missing, however, is a convenient and immediate way to deliver the content to the home. By far, the medium with the highest penetration is the DVD, but its bandwidth cannot support the data rate needed for viable 3D playback. Blu-ray is the logical candidate for a medium, and 3D content could be the shot-in-the-arm that the format needs to lift sluggish disc sales and rentals. Two powerhouses -- Panasonic and Dolby -- have announced at CES solutions for a 3D Blu-ray format, but here's the rub: they're not compatible, and the differences are like apples-and-oranges.

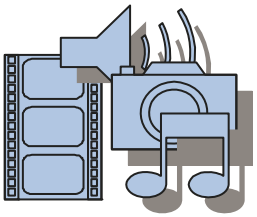
The Panasonic system, called the 3D Full HD (3D FHD) Plasma Home Theater System, delivers full 1080p left- and right-sided images all the way from recording to playback and display. The company has also developed the authoring technology needed to produce the discs. However, 3D content encoded with this process **cannot be played back on existing Blu-ray players**, and this means that a new 3D Blu-ray Disc (BD) player and disc encoding format is required. Panasonic has asked the BD Forum to standardize their 3D approach.

Dolby, however, is proposing a different approach to encoding 3D content, using the existing standard Blu-ray disc medium and standard Blu-ray players. The technique uses diagonally-subsampled versions of the left and right images, which are then re-integrated into complete frames, a method called "checkerboarding" (or more technically, quincunx spatial subsampling). The technique is compatible with current popular online and downloadable file formats, and uses a similar data footprint as a standard Blu-ray movie. In addition, it does not require changes to the Blu-ray, HDMI or MPEG specifications, and, according to Dolby, does not require an external decoder box.

But a format war would be disastrous to the 3D concept, given the current state of the economy. Without assurance that their purchased format will have viability, few consumers would be willing to shell out for a device that could quickly become obsolete. And waiting for a standard (or worse, building a product without it), will create further uncertainty, when some manufacturers are ready to roll out product now. Perhaps the best migration path would be to start with the checkerboard format and add a full-HD format later, as a standard matures. We can't afford a disc format war this year.

Events

As already communicated, we are planning yet another music day! This time in conjunction with A Sound Experience and Valve Audio.



PLEASE diarise the event details now:

Venue: Thula Thula Lodge (Pretoria)
Date: Saturday, 21 March 2009
Time: 09h00—17h00

I have visited the venue and it offers a lovely tranquil atmosphere, large open spaces, swimming pool and even self catering units for those that come from afar and wish to stay over! For more info and a **map** to the venue, please visit their website at www.thulathulalodge.co.za

The day promises to be worth you while! We will provide delicious food platters (and GOOD MUSIC!) at no cost! There is also no entrance fees. There will however be a cash bar on the premises where you can buy soft drinks and alcoholic drinks.

What to expect? Well, we will be showcasing all our brands (Ecosse, Spendor, EmmLabs, Maestro and Furutech) and the other guys will have their brands (Rega, Valve Audio, Stockfish Records, Naim, Grammophone, etc) on show.

Please RSVP to info@avcables.co.za if you plan to attend; stating names of attendees.

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News, Events and Reviews

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Latest Reviews

FURUTECH
PURE TRANSMISSION

FURUTECH TONEARM CABLE REVIEWED BY TONE AUDIO

Furutech's **AG-12 tonearm cable** was recently reviewed by Tone Audio Magazine.

Exceptional
TONE Audio Magazine 2008
Value Award

In short, this is what they had to say about this cable:

"Take it from me, it sounds damn good. Actually, this cable does a great job at not having a sound. I can tell you that the Furutech AG-12 is the ***most cost effective upgrade I've made to my analog front end*** *–* ***ever****. This cable strikes the perfect balance for me; it offers more musical detail without being even a tiny bit harsh.",* **Tone Audio - October 2008, Issue 18**

FURUTECH REF III CABLES REVIEWED BY AVSA

Furutech's Ref.III loudspeaker cable and Ref.III analogue inter-connect cable was recently reviewed by AVSA Magazine.

In short, this is what Deon Schoeman had to say about these cables:

"The Furutechs have the ability to extract and resolve ultra-fine grains of details, and to mould then into a smooth, cohesive whole. The result is an extremely focussed image, smoothly resolved and beautifully presented." - Deon Schoeman, **Audio Video SA Magazine - November 2008**

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Letters from our members

NOTICE: Please feel free to e-mail us at letters@avcables.co.za with your comments, suggestions, questions and/or inputs for possible addition to this section.

Furutech HDMIxv1.3 impresses!

The HDMI cable was tested on an X BOX and a LCD HD ready Panel.Transfering the digital signal was effortless. The image was sharp, clear and decisive. The sound quality was clear, detail and precise. The images were very realistic.

I recommend this cable to any person looking for HDMI connectivity in order to experience the full HD experience.

A very impressive cable.

Chan Velab—via e-mail

Thank you for providing such positive feedback. Everyone that have tried this cable have applauded its superiority to anything else they have encountered in the market. Well done Furutech!

Jeandré

Another powerful connection!

Hello Jeandre,

Sorry about the delay in responding. I've been without a PC for some time, operating from Blackberry.

The Furutech e-TP80E has been included in my system for some time now. The improvements it brought about were subtle, yet distinctly noticeable. Backgrounds seemed more quiet, while focus and space within the sound stage improved dramatically. Here is a hi-fi device that truly defies the "law of diminishing returns". Whether you've spent ten thousand rand or two hundred and ten thousand rand (or substantially more), the addition of a Furutech e-TP80E will bring about a noticeable improvement to the picture your speakers manage to paint before you. A great value for money upgrade.

Charl Fourie—via e-mail

Your letters here!

Our fourteenth lucky draw for a 1m pair of 'Ecosse Best Boy' analogue interconnect cables has taken place on 28 Feb 2009.

Our luck draw winner is **Kobus van Aswegen** from Gauteng.

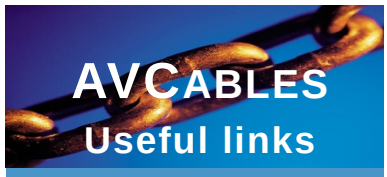
CONGRATULATIONS!

Our next draw will take place on 31 May 2009.

If you have not read the rules for this competition as yet, please do so now by clicking **here.**

Best of luck to all in the next draw!

Jeandré



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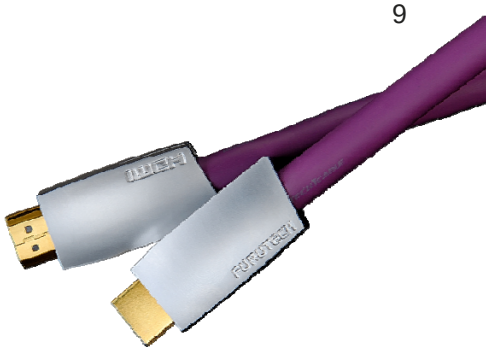
Equipment tweaks / upgrades / advise / FAQs….



HDMI™
HIGH-DEFINITION MULTIMEDIA INTERFACE

We will be covering FAQs on HDMI cables and HDMI technology in the next few issues. If you have a question of your own, please e-mail me and we'll cover it!!

Question 6: Do I need v1.3 HDMI to hear the new Dolby TrueHD and DTS Master HD audio content on HD-DVD or Blu-ray players?

No. The Dolby TrueHD, Dolby Digital Plus, and DTS-HD Master Audio can be decoded by the playback device into multi-channel Pulse Code Modulation (PCM) digital audio streams, which is an audio format standard that can be sent over any version of HDMI. In fact, all versions of HDMI can support up to 8 channels of PCM audio at 192kHz, 24 bits per sample.

To do this, consumers should ensure that their playback device (such as HD-DVD or Blu-ray player) is capable of decoding these new lossless Dolby & DTS audio formats into the PCM format on the HDMI output, and that the audio device (such as an A/V receiver) is capable of receiving multi-channel PCM audio over the HDMI inputs. Consult your user manual/product specification sheet to determine whether your device supports such PCM capabilities (we believe that nearly all HD-DVD and Blu-ray players will, but users should confirm this). Devices that support HDMI v1.3 and higher may also offer the option to transport the high definition audio formats as a compressed, encoded stream over HDMI so that the decoding function can be performed by the A/V receiver (whereas the above transport method has the playback device performing the decoding).

Question 7: What is the difference in quality between listening to Dolby TrueHD/DTS-HD over HDMI, SPDIF (i.e. coax or optical), or analogue from the player to the A/V receiver?

HDMI provides the highest quality as it enables the full, loss-less audio data of Dolby TrueHD to be transferred digitally to the AV receiver, and enables the A/V receiver to apply its full digital audio processing capabilities (such as bass management, or sound field processing effects) to further enhance the audio quality. SPDIF does not have the ability to support the data rates required by Dolby TrueHD, and thus will not support it.

Analogue will be lower quality than HDMI due to two reasons: (1) the nature of analogue transmission is lossy and will degrade while transported over the cables, and (2) many A/V receivers will not apply any digital audio processing to the analogue inputs, and in such cases analogue signals will be sent directly to the amplifier without the benefit of such processing.

continued in next edition...

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Jamo D870 Floostanding Speakers. R38 999 (New). Asking R23 000 not boxed. Excellent Condition. Phone Pieter 0834065907

Phone Pieter 0834065907

Polk TSI-300 Floor standing speakers. R5800 (New). Asking R3900 boxed. Excellent Condition.

TO SWOP

None

WANTED

None

Your classifieds here!

Prices subject to change without notice

While stocks last

*NEW ITEMS

	Was	Now
• Ecosse the Sub Ultra (3m, RCA 24k Gold plated):	R1,758	R1,494
• Ecosse Fibre Optic T2T Superior (3m ea):	R1,286	R1,093
• Ecosse DVI-D Picture Perfect (3m ea):	R2,037	R1,730
• Furutech FP203(G) 24k gold-plated spades (ea):	R95	R81
• Furutech FI-15E(G) high perform IEC power plugs (ea):	R409	R348
• Spendor S3e bookshelf speakers (Rosenut, pair):	R14,999	R12,750
• Spendor S6e floorstand speakers (Rosenut, pair):	R27,999	R23,800
• Spendor S6e floorstand speakers (Rosenut, pair):	R38,999	R33,150

DEMO ITEMS

	Was	Now
• 1x Ecosse ES4.45 BiWire 2x4 (3m set, ban/ban):	R4,503	R3,152
• 1x Ecosse Baton MkII (2m pair, XLR):	R4,906	R3,434
• 1x Ecosse CS2.3 BiWire centre 2x4 (1m, ban/ban):	R1,415	R990
• 1x Ecosse Prisma Superior Component (10m, RCA):	R2,992	R2,094
• 3x Ecosse S-Video MkII Monocrystal (1m each):	R1,072	R750
• 1x Ecosse MS2.3 centre 2x2 (1.5m each, ban/ban):	R1,479	R1,035
• 1x Ecosse MS2.3 centre 2x2 (2m each, ban/ban):	R1,801	R1,260
• 1x Ecosse SMS4.7 BiWire 2x4 (1.5m, ban/spade):	R13,957	R9,770

NB: *Please e-mail us at **sales@avcables.co.za** if you are interested in any of these SPECIALS, stating the item/s of interest to you and your location; and we will refer you to your closest **participating Dealer**.

AVCABLES CC Newsletter Back Issues

You can download back issues of our newsletter from our website by clicking **here**.

ISSUE 26— NOVEMBER 2008
- **Feature article:** Recap of the Sound & Vision Expo 2008
- **News:** New Ecosse MS 4.7 Bi-wire & Furutech Powerflux
- **Reviews:** Spendor S3/5R, Furutech Demag, Furutech e-TP609E and Ref III cables

ISSUE 27—DEC 2008 / JAN 2009
- **Feature article:** Robert Harley's system setup secrets (part 1)
- **News:** New Tonearm cables from Furutech
- **Reviews:** Spendor S3/5R, Spendor SA1, Spendor S8e, EmmLabs CDSA SE

ISSUE 28—FEB 2009
- **Feature article:** Harley's system setup secrets (part 2)
- **News:** Spendor's new A-line floorstands
- **Reviews:** Spendor S3/5R, Furutech DeMag

In our next edition...

- **Feature article**: Robert Harley's system setup secrets (part 4)
- **News:** New Furutech products
- **Events:** MUSIC DAY update
- **Reviews:** Spendor SA1, Spendor A5 / A6
- **Letters from members**
- **Technical Snippets:** HDMI FAQs
- **Competition corner**
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